

Pain Management Doctor Accomplishes What Many See As Impossible

Last year, the CDC released guidelines regarding the prescribing of chronic opioids that have been adopted by many health insurance companies. These guidelines suggest that patients should be below a certain dosage of opioids due to the risk of potential unintentional overdose. In addition, in February 2018, the CMS proposed policy changes regarding limits on the cumulative daily dose of opioids dispensed to patients on Medicare Part D.

Do clinicians and hospital systems continue to prescribe what is deemed unsafe or do they begin to taper their patients down, both of which have significant challenges? Many pain management providers would agree that it is nearly impossible to reduce a long-term patient's opioid dose, especially to the extent needed to abide by these guidelines, yet that is exactly what many have been asked to do.

The challenge of balancing the prescribing of pain medications for patients struggling with chronic pain against the continuing rise of opioid overdose leaves some clinicians opposed to prescribing opioids altogether. However, some doctors, like Anthony Mimms, MD, owner of Mimms Functional Rehabilitation in Indiana, are looking for solutions to this problem.

Dr. Mimms started directing the majority of his chronic pain patients to use Cordant Pharmacy Solutions™, which specializes in serving pain and substance use disorder patients. "I chose Cordant because its unique model and detailed reporting supported my goal of appropriately reducing patients' levels of pain medication or morphine equivalent dose (MED) levels," said Mimms.

What is an MED level? Dosages of all opioids can be converted to an equivalent of one medication—morphine—which allows for the ease of calculating risk levels. For a comparison of opioid doses, the MED metric was developed to equate the many different opioids into one standard value.

In December of 2016, when Mimms' patients first started using Cordant, almost 60 percent of his patients were above 120 MEDs, with 40 percent above 200 MEDs. However, by October 2017, almost 60 percent of continuously enrolled patients were now between 50 and 90 MEDs, with only 15 percent remaining above 200.

"Appropriate access to medication with the appropriate controls in place—that is the philosophy our pharmacy and integrated drug testing program is built around," said Susan Sommer, president and CEO of Cordant.

Working with Cordant, Mimms launched his reduction plan with a broad communication strategy of forthright conversations with patients around the risks of long-term opioid use, the option of using alternative medications such as Lyrica and gabapentin while reducing MED levels, and the benefits of exercise and other important lifestyle choices. Mimms and his team also reviewed Cordant's pharmacy reports routinely, detailing which patients were at higher risk for potential abuse/adverse effects and giving him control over the process of helping them to safely and effectively bring down their MED levels.

While he did lose some patients who refused changes to their treatment plan, he feels that both his patients and his practice are healthier due to the modifications he has implemented. "I have been thanked by so many patients for reducing their opioid medications. They were scared at

first, but for many of them it is like a fog has been lifted. They can be active participants with their families again, and they have a better sense of how they can really control their pain.”

“Physicians are in a really hard place right now,” said Mimms. “We need to help our patients who need pain management treatment in order to function and have productive lives, but we know there is a national drug epidemic and that opioids are part of that problem. The only solutions we’re given from outside the industry are more recommendations or regulations. Cordant’s pharmacy is the first real solution I have seen since drug testing became an option for clinicians.”

Cordant Health Solutions™ is at the forefront of combating today’s opioid epidemic through its network of toxicology laboratories and pharmacies. Cordant is committed to providing solutions for payers, clinicians and agencies involved with substance abuse disorder, criminal justice and pain management.

Find out your patient risk levels and how to address them today by emailing info@cordanths.com. To learn about Cordant’s programs and protocols, visit cordanths.com.

